

P-PATCH COMMUNITY GARDENING PROGRAM

PLOT SIZING GUIDELINE FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Is this happening at all gardens?

This is a program wide guideline. The vast majority of gardens are not affected. P-Patch is adopting a phased approach and the guideline will be implemented at gardens with high percentages of limited English Proficient populations beginning in 2014. An extra year is needed to devise strategies that will best adapt to the needs of these gardeners and to conduct outreach.

If a site has less than a two year wait time, why force gardeners to give up space?

P-Patches are a City-managed public resource and must be managed to promote fairness and transparency for current and potential users. It simply is not fair or transparent for a small number of people to have extra space simply because they have been in the program for a long time. At gardens with less than a year waitlist, gardeners, on a case by case basis, may be allowed to steward extra space until demand increases.

Why not enforce turnover of weedy plots first?

Keeping a plot tended is a requirement of the program. Enforcing this rule is one strategy in demand management that shouldn't operate in lieu of other strategies, like building more gardens or establishing maximum plot sizes. Monitoring untended plots is very important both for the program and the health of a P-Patch. It is also a process that requires support from P-Patch gardeners and P-Patch staff. We continue to work on improvements.

Doesn't the program value the food bank contributions of the large plot holders?

Absolutely, and we recognize that many large plot holders are the biggest contributors to their P-Patches. Growth in demand and the issue of fairness among gardeners, however, have made this the time to set standard sizes. In addition, the 70 new households that will get P-Patch plots because of this guideline will be able to make food bank donations and grow their own food, thus helping with personal food security.

Can I lose more space in the future?

No, if you have a minimum plot size. Yes, if the sizing of plots needs to change based on the plot sizing guideline.

Does this guideline affect the large tract program, market garden program, P-Patches focused on low income and immigrant/ refugee gardeners and collective gardens?

The large tract and market gardens are programs created by P-Patch to address City policy issues. These gardens focus on low income and refugee populations and implement a City interest in fostering urban agriculture use on municipal land. Collective gardens are gardened communally and have no individual plots. This guideline will ultimately affect gardens that focus on low income and immigrant and refugees, where many gardeners have Limited English Proficiency. Staff will use 2013 to assess and develop strategies that address the unique needs of these gardeners and their P-Patches. These strategies will be implemented by December 2014.



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Why has it taken so long to develop this guideline?

Development of this guideline in the last couple of years was the result of a number of factors. Growth in demand for P-Patch, the natural limit of asking gardeners to voluntarily relinquish gardening space, and the need to create transparency around maximum plot sizes and how to get more space. In addition, in the last two years staff has analyzed and better understood wait times around the city, which is one of the criteria for determining maximum sizes.

How does this guideline and implementation strategies fit within the RSJ goals of the city?

Creating fairness and transparency in the administration of a public resource is fundamentally a social justice goal. Examining the effect of the guideline on different groups and seeking implementation strategies that address unique needs is also an important RSJ goal.

When did gardeners find out about this guideline?

For at least ten years as demand has grown, staff have set plot size limits, new gardeners were allowed no more than the limit, and in some cases existing gardeners were asked to voluntarily relinquish space. One example of this trend is Queen Anne, which opened in 1995 with mostly 200sf plots and 43 plot holders; today it has 74 plot holders in mostly 100sf plots. Beginning in 2012 as P-Patch staff studied the issue, staff started concerted outreach around plot sizing. Methods included: discussion at Spring 2012 gardener gatherings, informal discussions with affected gardeners; explicit addition to 2012 Plot Assignment Guidelines, which are posted on the Department's website, discussion at a City Council Parks and Neighborhoods Committee in a presentation on management of P-Patch demand on July 19, 2012, and presentation at P-Patch Site leader meeting on November 10, 2012. In Winter of 2012, P-Patch staff started formal notice, which included: personal letter to out-of-compliance plot holders; program-wide newsletter article to announce the guideline (publication likely in Spring 2013); announcement of the guideline at Mayoral news conference in December 2012 and program-wide list serve announcement.



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